

REMARKS

Responsive to the Office Action mailed on November 2, 2005 in the above-referenced application, Applicant respectfully requests amendment of the above-identified application in the manner identified above and that the patent be granted in view of the arguments presented. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

Present Status of Application

Claims 1 and 3-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ejima et al (US 5,873,468, hereinafter "Ejima") in view of Matsuda et al (US 6,096,808, hereinafter "Matsuda"), and in further view of Iwamoto et al (US 5,950,836, hereinafter "Iwamoto"). Claims 19-24 are withdrawn from consideration.

In this paper, claims 1 and 9 are amended as described in further detail below. New claims 25 and 26 are added. Support for the amendments and new claims can be found in paragraphs 0023-0027 and Figs. 1-2 of the application. Claims 19-24 are canceled. Thus, on entry of this amendment, claims 1, 3-11 and 25-26 remain in the application.

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in light of the amendments and the remarks contained below.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claims 1 and 3-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ejima in view of Matsuda, and in further view of Iwamoto. To the extent that the grounds of the rejections may be applied to the claims now pending in this application, they are respectfully traversed.

MPEP 2142 reads in part:

To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined)

must teach or suggest all the claim limitations. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art, and not based on applicant's disclosure. *In re Vaeck*, 947 F.2d 488, 20 USPQ2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

In connection with the third criteria, MPEP 2143.03 goes on the state:

To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. *In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974). "All words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art." *In re Wilson*, 424 F.2d 1382, 1385, 165 USPQ 494, 496 (CCPA 1970).

As amended, claim 1 recites a panel carrier comprising a box, wherein interior lateral surfaces of the box have a plurality of cannelures and an interior of the box further comprises a bottom surface with cannelures thereon; and a **plurality of separate attaching elements**, wherein two opposing ends of each attaching element are *independently receivable* into any of the corresponding cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces to **partition the interior of the box into a plurality of compartments of various sizes for accommodating panels of various sizes concurrently**.

Claim 9 recites a panel carrier at least comprising a box, wherein interior lateral surfaces of the box have a plurality of cannelures; and a **plurality of separate attaching elements**, each attaching element comprising a plate and two opposing ends, wherein the two opposing ends of each attaching element are *independently receivable* into any of the corresponding cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces to **partition the interior of the box into a plurality of compartments of various sizes**, and **at least one side of the plate comprises a plurality of protruding edges such that any pair of the neighboring protruding edges of adjacently disposed attaching elements constitutes a slot for accommodating a panel**.

Ejima teaches a thin-plate supporting container including a wafer carrier 21 divided into a plurality of fixed slots by supporting ribs 21A. A thin-plate pressing member 22 is mounted on the upper side of the wafer carrier so as to press down on wafers disposed in the slots. See column 5, lines 18-35 and column 7, lines 3-14 of Ejima.

Matsuda teaches a cassette case for holding substrates therein comprising support members 18a-c provided with grooves 18d to receive and support substrates 20. The support members 18a-c are movable and may be spaced away from each other by moving lower support members 16a-b along shafts 14a-b to accommodate wafers of different width. See column 8, lines 20-40 and Fig. 4 of Matsuda.

Iwamoto teaches a container including lower shock absorbers 40 provided with grooves 42.

Whether taken alone or in combination, none of the cited references teach or a panel carrier comprising a plurality of separate attaching elements, each attaching element comprising a plate and two opposing ends, wherein the two opposing ends of each attaching element are independently receivable into any of the corresponding cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces of a box to partition the interior of the box into a plurality of compartments of various sizes, as recited in claims 1 and 9.

Claims 1 and 9 recite a plurality of separate attaching elements, wherein the two opposing ends of each attaching element are independently receivable into any of the corresponding cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces of a box to partition the interior of the box into a plurality of compartments of various sizes.

The rejections rely on Fig. 1, ref 22 of Ejima to teach "a plurality of attaching elements" inserted into "cannelures" 21A to partition the wafer carrier into compartments. However, Applicant respectfully submits that presser plate 22 does not comprise a **plurality of separate attaching elements**, as recited in claims 1 and 9. To the contrary, the ribs of presser plate 22 are joined together to correspond with the fixed positions of ribs 21A of the wafer carrier 21.

Applicant further submits that Ejima does not teach the two opposing ends of each attaching element are *independently receivable* into any of the corresponding cannelures. To the contrary, the joined ribs of presser plate 22 are received together as a unit in ribs 21A so as to press down on wafers received in the slots formed by ribs 21A. See column 7, lines 3-14 of Ejima.

Furthermore, as acknowledged by the Examiner, Ejima does not teach that the ribs of presser plate 22 partition the box into a plurality of compartments of various size. Instead, the Examiner relies on Fig. 4, ref 18 of Matsuda to teach this feature. It is unclear exactly what feature in Matsuda the Examiner is referring to as the "compartment" in the rejection. In Matsuda, wafers are accommodated/ supported by a plurality of opposing grooves in support members 18a-c, a pair of which Applicant will take to refer to a compartment for the purpose of the following comments.

It is noted that in any given arrangement of support members 18a-c in Matsuda, "compartments" of only a single size are created. Namely, at any given time, support members 18a-c are spaced a fixed distance apart corresponding to a wafer 20 of a given size. With reference to Fig. 4 of Matsuda, note that the support members 18a-c are moved together along the shafts 14a-b, and that wafer 20 is received in the grooves of each of support members 18a-c. More specifically, each of the "compartments" defined by grooves 18d is identical in size in any given arrangement of support members 18a-c. There is no description of a concurrent plurality of compartments of various sizes in Matsuda.

In connection with the Examiner's statement that Matsuda teaches "panels having a different width can be supported by the panel hold plates," Applicant first notes that the "compartments" for accommodating panels are not of various sizes, and secondly notes that in Matsuda any particular arrangement of support members 18a-c is suitable of supporting panels of a single width. See Fig. 4, where only panels of the width of the illustrated wafer 20 could be supported by support members 18a-c.

If in fact the Examiner is referring to the space between the support members 18a-c as a first compartment, and the spaces outside the support members 18a-c as a second and third

compartment, Applicant notes that the spaces outside the support members 18a-c are not compartments and do not accommodate wafers.

Whether taken alone or in combination, none of the cited references teach or a panel carrier comprising an attaching element comprising a plate and two opposing ends in which *at least one side of the plate comprises a plurality of protruding edges such that any pair of the neighboring protruding edges of adjacently disposed attaching elements constitutes a slot for accommodating a panel*, as recited in claim 9.

In the office action, the Examiner relies on Ejima to teach the above highlighted feature of claim 9. However, while each rib of the presser plate 22 of Ejima comprises a “plate” and two ends received in the ribs 21A of the wafer carrier 21, the “plate” is not provided with a plurality of protruding edges such that any pair of the neighboring protruding edges of adjacently disposed attaching elements constitutes a slot for accommodating a panel, as recited in claim 9.

It is therefore Applicant’s belief that even when taken in combination, the prior art references relied upon by the Examiner do not teach or suggest all the limitations of claims 1 and 9. For at least this reason, a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be established in connection with these claims. Furthermore, as it is Applicant’s belief that a *prima facie* case of obviousness is not established for claims 1 and 9, the Examiner’s arguments in regard to the dependent claims are considered moot and are not addressed here. Allowance of claims 1 and 3-11 is respectfully requested.

New Claims 25-26

New claim 25 recites that each attaching element of claim 1 further comprises a bottom end receivable in any of the cannelures of the bottom surface of the box. New claim 26 recites that the box of claim 9 further comprises a plurality of bottom cannelures corresponding to the cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces, and each attaching element further comprises a bottom end receivable in the bottom cannelure corresponding to the cannelures on the two opposing interior lateral surfaces in which the attaching element is received.

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Applicant submits that whether taken alone or in combination, none of the cited references teach or suggest these features.

Conclusion

The Applicant believes that the application is now in condition for allowance and respectfully requests so.

Respectfully submitted,



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